

Wrestlemania V Sets New Attendance Record

By CANDICE CARMEL

Preliminary figures are just starting to come in for Wrestlemania V, and by the looks of it, the "Mega-Powers" have once again prevailed. The event promises to be the biggest yet for the World Wrestling Federation.

Held for the second time at the Trump Plaza Hotel & Casino, Atlantic City, N.J., on April 2, Hulk Hogan and friends drew a sellout crowd of 20,313, up from last year's record-setting attendance of 19,011. An additional 2,000 seats had been added this year to accommodate increased demand at the Atlantic City Convention Center, adjacent to Trump's.

Opening acts included Morton Downey Jr. and rappers Run-D.M.C. Tickets were priced at \$150, \$100, \$50 and \$25. Merchandise sales alone accounted for \$275,892, with per caps running at

a whopping \$13.58, according to Basil DeVito, vice president. Gross receipts from ticket sales were not disclosed.

Wrestlemania V items on sale were T-shirts (\$15), hats (\$12), watches (\$10), and posters (\$5). More than 40 other WWF merchandise and novelty items were also on sale at the event and in closed-circuit venues around the country.

Although pay-per-view figures were just starting to trickle in as of April 5, the buy rate is expected to exceed one million homes, according to Jim Troy, senior vice president of pay-per-view operations.

"Last year (for Wrestlemania IV) we had 900,000 out of 10.2 million homes tuned in. This year, twelve million households were available for hook-up and it looks like we'll easily surpass the one million mark. One thing we're noticing is an increase in utilization

per household — in other words, the number of viewers in each house has increased significantly," he said.

The suggested retail price for hook-up was \$24.95, and 979 cable systems carried it. Strong responses have been reported so far include the following:

- Cablevision (covers New York, Chicago, and Boston) — 10.2 percent buy rate out of 600,000 systems.

- Cook Cable System (Syracuse, N.Y.) — nine percent buy rate out of 17,600 systems.

- Barden Cable (Detroit) — 13 percent buy rate out of 52,000 systems.

- United Cable of New Hampshire — 12,092 buys out of 8,500 subs.

- Choice Cable (Los Angeles) — "No figures yet, but they were already ahead from last year's sales

before the day of the event."

- Valley Cable (Los Angeles) and Viacom Cable (San Francisco) — Also reported doing well before day of event.

"Some systems, like United Cable in Denver, were very strong. There were more buy rates there for this event than for any they've carried before," said Troy.

He reported only two systems underperforming from last year, attributing it to a higher utility per household versus individual buyers.

"Where there has been a drop-off in any market, it has been due to this. We've seen that in apartment complexes, etc., there has been a higher number of orders going in, but a few days later there are some cancellations. People are gathering to watch the event, which shows us that our name is

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becoming more marketable and a franchise we can capitalize on. Non-viewers or seldom ones are tuning in to the event as a social function, which is the same case as people who never watch football all year but will tune in to watch the Super Bowl because it's such an event."

Closed-circuit locations numbered 63 in the U.S. and 55-60 in Canada, for a total of half a million seats. No attendance figures for these were available as of AB presstime, though sales are predicted to be strong.

Some of the venues that carried

the event were: Los Angeles (Calif.) Sports Arena; Cow Palace, San Francisco, Calif.; Boutwell Auditorium, Birmingham, Ala.; Miami (Fla.) Arena; Cobo Arena, Detroit, Mich.; Garden State Racetrack Pavilion, Cherry Hill, N.J.; Madison Square Garden Felt Forum, and Nassau Coliseum, New York.

"The racetrack at Cherry Hill, with a capacity of about 3,000, was the first venue in the contract to sell out," noted Troy. Wrestlemania V was also carried live in Italy and Switzerland, and will be shown on taped delay in 30 foreign countries.